

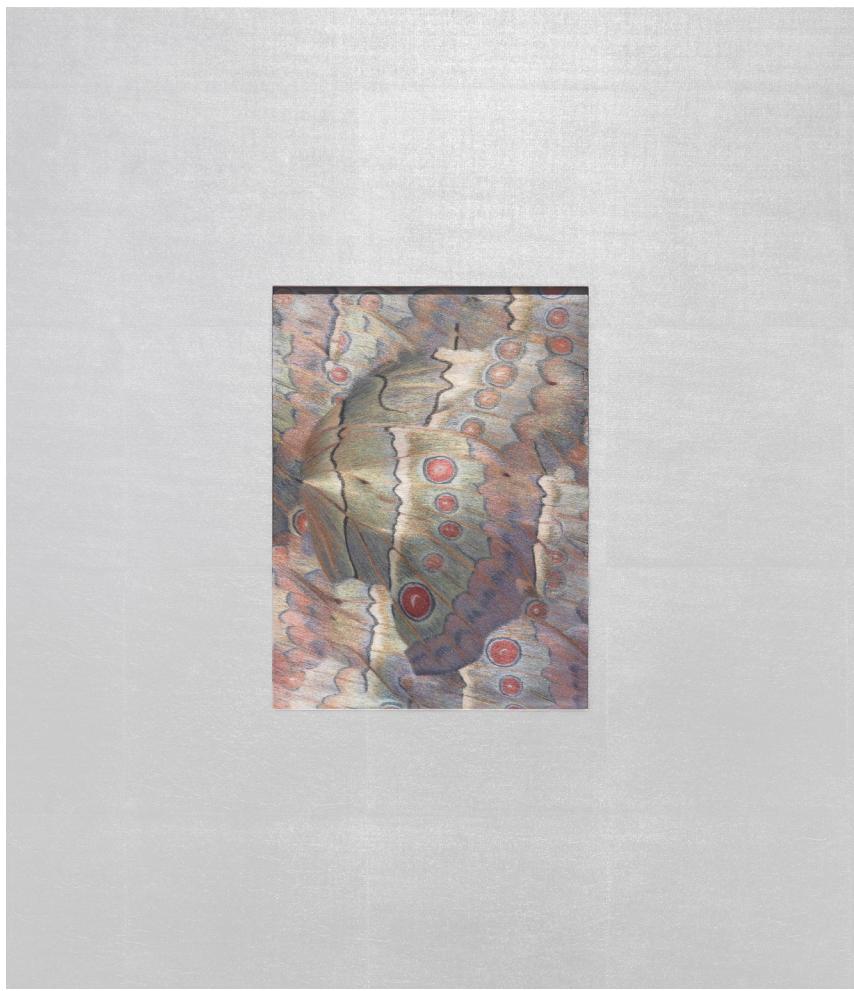
# ARTFORUM

Reviews New York

## Wang Ye

YveYANG

by Jenny Wu



Wang Ye, *Over Its Own Reflection*, 2025, handmade silk embroidery, 10 x 7 5/8".

“Legume Blossoms in Blue,” Wang Ye’s first solo exhibition in New York, included seven silk embroideries and three soft sculptures made in Changsha, a city in China’s Hunan province, where the artist was born and continues to reside. Using two-thousand-year-old needlework techniques learned from local craftswomen, Wang produced embroideries such as *Over Its Own Reflection*, 2025, which depicts a dense cluster of moth wings—rife with brown-and-green scales and maroon eyespots—hanging in the hallway leading into YveYANG’s main gallery space. As they had the other embroideries here, Wang encased the work in a wide, shimmery silver frame, allowing the image to show through a relatively small, paperback-size aperture. Rendered in fine and lustrous silk threads so compactly woven that they formed a firm, smooth surface, the sundered appendages with their decoy eyes looked alive, as if they were pressing up against the glass that had trapped them.

Embroiderers from Hunan typically favor a bold yet naturalistic style of representation, depicting local animals (lions, tigers) and native flora (lotuses, peonies) within semi-illusionistic or stylized spaces. Wang seems to have distilled from their teachings an exquisite sense of grandeur, executed with seamlessly blended stitches and well-

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placed ornamentation. The artist has jettisoned more traditional subject matter for a looser form of realism that embraces pattern, flatness, and abstraction. Consider *Salty and Sweet*, 2025, a work that featured a smattering of green- and pink-tinted shells, which cover the surface of the composition like a pearly wallpaper. The gradient of blue, brown, yellow, and green in *When Time Folds*, 2025, could have been sourced from the plumage of a mallard, though the bird was evoked only in palette, not in form. The blue-and-white flurry issuing from *Before the echo fades*, 2025, resembled an allover painting, its threads marshaled into formations that look like ink washes and speckled paint. In *No One Behind*, 2025, Wang evoked a mottled field of wispy, wind-tousled grass; small mauve blossoms float amid the shimmer.

The three sculptures on view—*Catching Light*, 2014; *Catching Light (Early Spring)*, 2023; and *Catching Light (Fire)*, 2025, all long, loosely woven silk nets hanging from the ceiling—punctuated the space with vectors of scintillating hue. Scrutinizing the meshes, one could see the knots where one length of thread terminated and another was connected. Read as deconstructed or “backstage” views of the pristine embroideries on the walls, these works evoked a sybaritic artisan who sank deeply into the materiality of silk and the voluptuousness of color.

According to the exhibition text, after learning about an embroidery of blue legume blossoms associated with a legendary late-nineteenth-century craftswoman from Hunan named Madam Wei, Wang, like many a Romantic before them, went searching for the actual blooms. In their hometown, however, they discovered only the “white and violet varieties.” This might explain the sense of wistfulness that pervades the artist’s fragmentary works. The piece that most firmly embraced illusionism, *The Room with the View*, 2025—a captivating, thoroughly melancholic outlier—shows an uninhabited drawing room where two lonely tables stand before a magnificent picture window overlooking a tree-filled garden. One bears a vase with flowers, while the other is large and covered by an ice-blue needlework cloth laden with soft pink petals: an embroidery within an embroidery. The dark-green floor of this tableau looked boggy and mercurial, similar to the field in *No One Behind*. Perhaps the ground Wang depicts was never meant to be trod on, and the scenes they conjure—like the elusive blue flowers of Changsha—were never meant to be found.